

City of Millville
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
South of Union Lake, adjacent
to the Maurice River
Millville
Cumberland County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1165

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CITY OF MILLVILLE

HABS No. NJ-1165

Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, South of Union Lake, adjacent to the Maurice River, Millville, Cumberland County, New Jersey.

Significance: Millville is representative of small towns which developed during the mid-1800s in response to the lumber industry. This industry depended on the nearby woodlands and the adjacent Maurice River for materials and transportation.

History:

Prior to the founding of Millville, Henry Drinker and Joseph Smith purchased 24,000 acres of woodland here, built a dam, and formed the Union Company whose main product was lumber cut at the water-powered sawmill and floated downriver. In 1795 Joseph Buck, a Cumberland County resident and Revolutionary War veteran, bought a portion of the Union Company land and planned Millville. The town was laid out to facilitate the erection of mills on every possible tract along the river, with manor houses situated on higher ground to the east. His plans show streets extending from Smith to Broad streets, and from Buck to Fourth streets along the river. As Buck planned, Millville's first residents established themselves on the east side of the river, though as more people settled there, houses were built on the opposite shore, too. Millville was incorporated in 1866.

Millville resident Charles K. Landis purchased a large tract of land that included the land north of the dam that had once been owned by the Union Company, and extended into Gloucester and Atlantic counties. In 1862 Landis laid out the town of Vineland about two-and-one-half miles east of the Maurice River and seven miles north of Millville. In 1864 Vineland was separated from Millville Township and became part of newly formed Landis Township. Since then, Millville Township (which was divided from Fairfield and Maurice River townships in 1801) has consisted only of the town of Millville. Vineland, while historically connected to Millville, is outside the NJCHT study area.

Dwellings on the east side of Millville exemplify Buck's ideal of an integrated residential-company complex and reflect a variety of nineteenth-century architectural styles. The Richard Wood Mansion (1804), made of South Jersey sandstone, was built by David Wood who, along with Edward Smith of Philadelphia, bought the Union Company and improved the dam, which they used to power a blast furnace.

The mansion is flanked by blocks of houses that were rented to Wood company employees. These are either plain, two-story double A-Fronts with four bays across, or boxier three-story, three-pile, six-bay dormitory-like buildings with two ridge chimneys. Entrances are in the third bay of the side facade, or centered in the gable end. Few of the latter, especially, are decorated; on the ones that do contain ornamentation, it is usually limited to spindlework on the porch. Present occupants have restored the buildings' exterior with aluminum or faux-brick asphalt siding--perhaps to help establish their identity in the neighborhood.

Double dwellings on close-by Archer Street reflect late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century middle-class origins. These gambrel-roof, gable-front, double piles appear to be a bilaterally symmetrical plan. A total of six bays across, the recessed entries are in the outermost bays. One-story porches that wrap around the facade from door to door, and hipped-roof dormers, are common; others have a pent or visor instead of a porch.¹ Elsewhere in Millville, worker's housing is found near the Foster-Forbes Glass factory aligning both sides of Route 47 at the south end of town, and on the west side of the river on both sides of Route 49. These, too, are double-A types, though the ornament is more Victorian, akin to buildings in Bridgeton and Salem.

Millville's refined and eclectic Victorian upper-class housing is mostly located on the northeast side of the Maurice River between Pine and Oak streets, on either side of Route 47/Second Street. Their ornamentation reflected the prestige assumed by the occupants. Second Empire and Italianate design features predominate, with mansard roofs and deep eaves, scroll-based window surrounds, tall rounded or pointed windows, steep patterned roofs with elaborate brackets, bays and spindlework porches. The Gothic Revival styles have pointed windows, cross gables, and steeply pitched roofs. Examples include the Edward Stokes house (ca. 1870), Second Street between Mulberry and Pine, home of a Millville native who served as governor 1904-08. The Smith-Garrison-Ware House (ca. 1850), opposite the Stokes house, was home to Robert Pearsall Smith, manager of Whitall Tatum Company and founder of the Workingmen's Institute. The Isaac Owen House (1854), South Second Street, was built and owned by a Port Elizabeth carpenter who constructed the Union Lake Dam, Millville Bank, and other structures in Millville.² The historic commercial thoroughfares are High Street, --Main Street/Route 49, and Second Street/Route 47.

Mills

Gristmills and sawmills were among the earliest local industries, built on outlying creeks and rivers, and in Bridgeton and Millville where they marked the first sign of settlement. Tide mills powered by the ebb and flow of the creek waters existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Greenwich, Mill Creek, and Mannington Meadows.³

In the late eighteenth century the Union Company was started by Henry Drinker and Joseph Smith who purchased 24,000 acres near Millville. The company used the dam to power sawmills; the lumber was then floated down river where it was loaded on to ships bound for market. In 1795 Joseph Buck, Eli Elmer, and Robert Smith bought the Union property. Buck then planned the city of Millville--slated to contain mills and other industries fueled by water passing over the dam. Many mill and factory owners here gained access to the nearby waterpower by digging canals to their property.

Buck's plans for the city became reality when David Wood and Edward Smith established Smith and Wood Iron Foundry, as previously discussed. Wood's brother, Richard, added to the family prosperity by establishing a cotton mill next to the foundry in 1854. The business operated as New Jersey Mills until 1860 when a bleachery and dye house were added; this became Millville Manufacturing. Upon establishment of the bleachery and dye house, Wood then constructed a new dam, creating the largest manmade lake in New Jersey. The water power from the dam allowed the mill to produce its own electricity in the late nineteenth century. By 1870 the mill had 25,000 spindles, 500 looms, and 600 employees. Thirty-nine years later the number of employees had doubled.

Many Millville Manufacturing employees lived in homes constructed by the Wood family in the surrounding area. Moreover, they shopped at the company store located on Columbia Avenue next to the Wood Mansion. The company also constructed a wood bridge across the Maurice River to shorten the distance for those workers who lived on the western shore. Though the worker housing exists today, many of the industrial buildings associated with Millville Manufacturing do not. However, buildings connected with the foundry exist, including the pump house used by the cotton mill. Like Millville Manufacturing, Hires, Prentiss and Company of Quinton's Bridge provided housing for its workers. The two-family dwellings are intact along the Quinton-Alloway Road/Route 581.

¹ John A. Jakle, et al., Common Houses in America's Small Towns (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 142-43.

² Register of Historic Sites of Structures in Millville (Millville: Chamber of Commerce, [n.d.]), n.p.

³ Harry B. Weiss and Robert J. Sim, Early Grist and Flouring Mills of New Jersey (Trenton: New Jersey Agricultural Society, 1956), 11-19.

Sources: Jakle, John A., et al. Common Houses in America's Small Towns: The Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi Valley. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989.

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Dale Wettstein Collection. Millville: Steelman Photographics.

Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.



Working on road bed in Millville, New Jersey. Main Street (State Route 49) and Fifth Street. April 23, 1915.

Dale Wettstein Collection. Millville: Steelman Photographics.



The City of Millville, New Jersey. O.H. Bailey & Co. Lith. & Pub. Boston. 1886